

Rep. Courtney Secures Wins for Connecticut's Defense Industry, Servicemembers in Committee-Passed FY24 National Defense Authorization Act

Background:

Rep. Joe Courtney helped secure key priorities for Connecticut in the committee-passed FY '24 National Defense Authorization Act. Once signed into law, this funding will help secure Connecticut's role as a leader in the nation's defense industry and meet the short and long-term needs of our U.S. Navy, America's shipbuilding infrastructure, and the men and women who wear our nation's uniform.

Submarines and Undersea Capabilities – the HASC-passed NDAA authorizes a total of \$18.2 billion for submarine procurement, repair, and research & development priorities including:

- Columbia-class submarine – authorizes \$2.5 billion for the first increment for the second boat in the program and \$3.4 billion in advanced procurement of materials to maintain delivery schedule.
- Virginia-class submarine – authorizes \$10 billion to sustain the two-per-year build rate of new Virginia-class submarines with \$7.1 billion for two submarines in 2024 and \$2.9 billion to support future construction of submarines in 2025 and 2026. The bill also includes a Courtney-authored provision from the Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee to authorize 13 Block VI Virginia-class submarines for the next contract to increase the procurement rate above two-per-year in support of AUKUS.
- Submarine Industrial Base – this mark builds on the unprecedented investment in the submarine industrial base in the FY23 budget and authorizes \$735 million to stabilize and bolster the industrial base. That includes \$488 million for submarine supplier development, shipyard infrastructure, strategic outsourcing, as well as \$247 million for workforce development initiatives.
- Submarine Research and Development – authorizes \$1.2 billion in research and development for future submarine capabilities, including \$241 million to develop the next block of Virginia-class submarines and \$361 million to develop the SSN(X), the planned future follow-on to the Virginia-class. These efforts are critical to sustaining the health of the design and engineering workforce at Electric Boat.
- Academic Partnerships for Submarine and Undersea Vehicle Research and Manufacturing – the bill includes an amendment Rep. Courtney authored to reallocate \$5 million towards supporting partnerships with academic institutions conducting research on undersea capabilities, such as the National Institute for Undersea Vehicle Technology at the University of Connecticut.
- Undersea Surveillance Systems – authorizes \$2.5 million for continued development and operational testing of unmanned remote acoustic systems, which will help the Navy evaluate existing off-the-shelf platforms like those developed by Groton's Thayer Mahan.
- Advanced Submarine Control – authorizes a Rep. Courtney-requested priority of \$7 million for research and development efforts to improve low speed dynamic maneuverability for the next block of Virginia-class submarines and beyond, like those currently under development at Progeny Systems in Groton.

Aerospace Capabilities:

- F-35 Joint Strike Fighter – supports the budget request to authorize 83 F-35 aircrafts for the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps.
- F135 Engine – the bill fully authorizes the budget request of \$431 million for the F135 Engine Core Upgrade to provide the most capable, low-cost modernization program to power the F-35 currently underway at Pratt & Whitney in East Hartford.
- Blackhawks – fully supports the budget request of 24 aircrafts built at Sikorsky.
- CH-53K – fully supports the budget request of 15 aircrafts built at Sikorsky.
- Combat Rescue Helicopter – the bill includes a Courtney-authored amendment to prohibit the Air Force from using FY24 funds to terminate, or plan to terminate, the aircraft's production line with no aircraft requested in the budget.

Support for Servicemembers and their families:

- TRICARE Coverage Expansion – the bill contains Rep. Courtney's *Sergeant First Class Michael Clark TRICARE Reserve Parity Act* to extend TRICARE benefits for three years to surviving families of military personnel killed in less than 30 days of being activated. This effort, led with Rep. Trent Kelly (R-MS), brings parity for TRICARE benefits awarded to surviving families of Active-Duty personnel. The American Legion, National Guard Association of the United States, and the Reserve Organization of America support this effort.
- DOD Pay Raise – authorizes a 5.2 percent pay raise for all members of the Armed Forces and civilian personnel at the Department of Defense.
- Parity for Junior Enlisted Members – authorizes the Secretary of Defense to pay junior enlisted members a monthly bonus as economic conditions dictate.
- Basic Allowance for Housing – fully restores Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments to reduce out of pocket expenses to servicemembers and requires the DOD to study a more transparent, fair and flexible way to calculate BAH. The bill also removes BAH from the calculation of the Basic Needs Allowance to ensure that servicemembers receive their full benefits they are entitled to.
- Defense Impact Aid – authorizes \$50 million for the DOD supplemental impact aid program, which provides support to local school districts with high proportion of military children, including Groton public schools. This program builds on existing Impact Aid funding through the Department of Education, which is not in the jurisdiction of the House Armed Services Committee.

Other eastern Connecticut Priorities:

- Naval Submarine Base New London – fully authorizes two projects, including extending Pier 31 to support longer submarines equipped with the Virginia Payload Module and a new weapons magazine for increased munitions storage to support enhanced security measures associated with the Virginia Payload Module.
- DOD Microelectronics – authorizes an additional \$3 million for the Department of Defense to continue development and acquisition of critical technologies materials required for DOD platforms, like those produced at TTM Technologies in Stafford and Stafford Springs.
- Navy DD-214 Backlogs – the bill includes an amendment by Rep. Courtney that requires the Navy to study DD-214 transactions to better streamline separation documents for Sailors separating from the Navy. Rep. Courtney has consistently heard from Sailors at Naval Submarine Base New London that have not received their paperwork on time, which is necessary to receive benefits and employment opportunities.